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United for Quality Care

New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199 | 77 Huyshope Ave., Hartford CT 06106 | (860) 549-1199 | www.seiu1199ne.org

Appropriations Committee - Budget Hearings RE: Legislative  
Agencies  
February 19, 2013

*H.B. No. 6350: Testimony AGAINST merger of Permanent Commission  
on the Status of Women*  
Jennifer Smith, Legislative Director, District 1199/SEIU  
Healthcare

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As a union of predominantly-women healthcare workers,  
District 1199/SEIU Healthcare recommends against the proposed  
merger/elimination of the Permanent Commission on the Status of  
Women (PCSW) in *H.B. No. 6350, An Act Concerned the Budget for  
the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015, and Other Provisions Relating  
to Revenue.*

While we may all want to tell ourselves that gender  
discrimination is a thing of Connecticut's past, today's facts  
clearly show the ongoing need for the PCSW:

- ↓ CT women today are paid only .76¢ for every \$1.00 CT  
men receive.
- ↓ CT women disproportionately go without any health  
insurance or are forced rely on Medicaid and Medicare  
because coverage from their employer is either not  
provided or is not affordable.
- ↓ CT women make up less than 30% of the 2013-2014 General  
Assembly.

PCSW is the only public entity that actively researches,  
advocates, and monitors Connecticut's policies and practices to  
ensure they are non-discriminatory to women and advance the  
status of women – whether in government, education, the  
workplace, and in terms of access to healthcare.

Of our 26,000 union healthcare workers in Connecticut, over  
72% are women. Our caregiving jobs have always been relegated as  
"women's work" and devalued by paying substandard wages and  
benefits compared to traditional-yet-comparable "men's" jobs.  
Over the past 40+ years, we've fought to raise standards and  
equity for women in the healthcare field – and PCSW has been a  
critical force in that struggle.

Our economy and our healthcare system are in the middle of  
great transition, which makes the PCSW as important as ever:

- 1.) *Economic Disparity & Gender Discrimination* – in the  
effort to reduce state's healthcare costs, women need the  
PCSW to help ensure pressures for 'savings' are not  
pushed onto backs of women direct care workers.
- 2.) *Health Care Disparity* – as Connecticut and the nation  
implement the Affordable Care Act, women need the PCSW to  
help ensure insurance plans are affordable,  
comprehensive, and include access to women's health  
services.

3.) *Leadership Development* - with women holding a *minority* of local, state, or national offices, where major decisions affecting women get made, we need the PCSW to help recruit and encourage women of all political perspectives to run.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to maintain the PCSW in the 2014-2015 budget as an individual, independent force for Connecticut's women.